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It's a time for unity, not lashing out

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BY MIKE HONDA

The events of Sept. 11 still resonate in our hearts and our minds as we search for ways to express our mixed emotions. Over the last two weeks, our actions and responses have been heartfelt, positive and constructive as we work to rebuild and heal.

Unfortunately, some people have chosen to deal with this tragedy in a vengeful and hateful manner, lashing out violently at innocent Americans.

The deaths and injuries to American citizens, such as the shooting of Balbar Singh Sodhi in Mesa, Ariz., sadden me as much as do the deaths of Sept. 11.

We must not let our response to the tragic attacks be clouded by hatred and racial prejudice. Instead, this should be a time of unity, a time to overcome our differences and stand together as one nation, indivisible.

Here is a list of 10 actions that every citizen can take to promote unity and tolerance in our community.

- 1) Love starts at home. Discuss issues of tolerance with your children, family members and friends.
- 2) Host a "Dialogue Dinner," inviting friends of different backgrounds for a meal or coffee.
- 3) Offer to volunteer your time at a community organization that teaches diversity and helps those in need.
- 4) Patronize restaurants or eateries of different cultures to demonstrate your solidarity.
- 5) Attend a religious service of a faith different from your own.
- 6) Contact the Office of Human Relations at <http://www.co.santa-clara.ca.us/hrc/index.htm> or (408) 299-2206 or the Santa Clara County Network for a Hate-Free Community (408) 792-2304 to get involved.
- 7) Attend a cultural festival such as the Moon Festival in Cupertino on Sept. 30.
- 8) Participate in conflict resolution, mediation or diversity training.
- 9) Write letters in support of tolerance to your newspaper, radio station and elected officials.
- 10) As a student at Pioneer High reminded me, "A simple smile or a hello goes a long way toward making people feel good."

I congratulate all of you who have taken time to support relief efforts by giving blood, donating time or money, or simply lending your thoughts and prayers to the victims of this horrible action against our nation. I urge you to

remember that practicing tolerance is also a form of direct action. It may be the greatest way to help during this time of healing.

Mike Honda is a Democratic congressman from San Jose.

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